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DID THE SUCCESS  
OF THE  
EVANGELICAL MOVEMENT  
OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY  
CHIEFLY CONSIST IN THE  
PROPAGATION OF DISSENT?

**An Enquiry**

SUGGESTED BY

*AN ARTICLE IN THE 'CHURCH QUARTERLY REVIEW'*  
OF JULY, 1877.

BY

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RIVINGTONS  
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MDCCCLXXVII



## AN ENQUIRY, &c.

THE *Church Quarterly Review*, published in July last, has an article entitled "The Church of England in the Eighteenth Century," in which it undertakes to show that the fathers of the Evangelical movement which took place in that century, are chiefly responsible for the vast amount of Dissent which now exists throughout our land.

Of three historical circumstances which the writer of it says he shall endeavour to sketch, the third is "The deplorably mistaken course taken by the fathers of the Evangelical movement, and the reasons why, while working for the revival of true religion, they succeeded chiefly in the propagation of Dissent."<sup>1</sup> By the fathers of the Evangelical movement, however, he does not mean to imply those who would ordinarily be understood by that expression in the present day. He uses it as a designation of certain earnest men, who associated themselves with Wesley and Whitfield in their supposed mission and irregular ministrations. The date of this union he fixes at 1740, just at the time when "the practice of field preaching had begun, and the foundations of Methodism, as a substantive and organised sect, existing independently of the Church, were now to be laid." These are Southey's words, writing of the year 1739.<sup>2</sup> "About 1740," says the reviewer, "Wesley and Whitfield suddenly altered their plans," i. e. from a dutiful compliance with Church order, which had hitherto been their principle, to an independent and irregular course of action. "Claiming the world for their parish, they

<sup>1</sup> Page 318.

<sup>2</sup> Chap. vii. See also his chap. xii., which is headed "Methodism systematised—Classes—Itinerancy, Lay Preaching,"

undertook the spiritual reformation of England's Church and nation. Many earnest men joined them, and thus was commenced what was called the Evangelical party."<sup>1</sup>

The reviewer has an undoubted right to define as he pleases the terms which he employs. But, if he wishes to construct a convincing argument, he must adhere to his own definitions. By his forgetfulness of this essential condition, he has been betrayed into the most unjust and unwarrantable conclusions. Not content with recording the proceedings of Wesley and Whitfield, and those who, by joining them, became partakers of their schism, and responsible for its results, he has travelled over our Church history to the end of the century, and even beyond it, as far as 1832, and by continual repetition of the same terms, "the Evangelical movement," "the Evangelical body," "the Evangelicals," "the Evangelical clergy," he has endeavoured to involve one class of men in a fault and all its consequences, which, strictly speaking, are only applicable to another.

He should have remembered that the Evangelical body, commonly so called, and as he applies the phrase in the course of his argument, did not come under the definition as he had previously laid it down. He should have fairly given his readers to understand, "that there was a body of Evangelical labourers, who were independent of the Methodists, and nearly contemporaneous with them, and whose labours had an immediate and remarkable influence upon the clergy of the Church of England."<sup>2</sup>

But this distinction he has altogether ignored. Identifying the Evangelical party of his own definition with the Evangelical party as that phrase is generally understood, he presents the latter to his reader under such an aspect as must lead him of necessity to conclude, that the latter, during a lengthened period of sixty or even ninety years, were intimately associated with the former, and pursuing the same destructive course. In point of fact, if not of deliberate intention, the article links together a body of men who laboured all that time with zeal and faithfulness *within* the Church with another body who had become open schismatics, so closely that an incautious reader can hardly fail to regard them as one and the same.

<sup>1</sup> Page 340.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. H. Venn, Life of his Grandfather, of the same name.



To this the reviewer will of course reply, that in pursuing his investigation of facts up to so late a date, he has but pointed out that the actual condition of the Church in 1800 was only the full development, "the legitimate outcome," of the deplorably mistaken course which had been commenced in 1740. This in truth is what he does say on pages 340, 353. What, however, is this but to affirm that the same system had been going on from first to last; that the same parties had been working in the same way, and that this was the sum total of the mischief that had resulted from their operations as one body?

No doubt he will also retort that Mr. Venn and others<sup>1</sup> did so manifestly fraternise with Dissent, as to make it impossible to maintain the distinction which is here asserted. Upon this point I shall reserve for a future page what I have to say; only observing at present that whatever amount of condemnation be passed upon the individual persons, or the particular acts which the reviewer has specified,<sup>2</sup> it would be a very harsh judgment indeed which would make a whole body of men, laymen and clergymen of the Church, responsible for every act of indiscretion committed by the several members of their body for a lengthened period of sixty or ninety years.

Had the argument pursued in the article been confined within the limits to which the preliminary words of the writer had restricted it, I should certainly not have troubled myself to examine it, or to dispute the correctness of its conclusions. The question, how far Wesley and Whitfield were accountable for the marvellous growth of Dissent up to the close of the eighteenth century, would have been one of comparatively little interest. Everyone knows that their followers are now very numerous, and that several branches have sprung from the stock of the original schism. To what extent that schism had multiplied "Independent Congregations,"<sup>3</sup> or contributed to "the spread of the cancer of Rationalism,"<sup>4</sup> I should gladly have left it to others to enquire. But in my humble opinion the course of the argument, coupled with the inexact use of the word by which the reviewer designates the offenders whom it is the object of the article to drag to light, is calculated to lead to much miscon-

<sup>1</sup> See his page 344.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Page 342.

<sup>4</sup> Page 357.

ception, and to inflict an unmerited stigma upon a body of men who are entitled to the respect and grateful remembrance of the Church.

The reviewer admits that the fathers of the Evangelical movement were zealous and earnest men, but represents their proceedings in such a light that any reader, who should form his judgment of them—of their principles, their teaching, and their actions—solely from the picture he has drawn, must of necessity conclude that they can only be regarded as a set of enthusiasts who inflicted a grievous blow upon the Church, and did an immense amount of harm to the cause of religion. It is well known that many members of the Church entertain an opinion quite at variance with such a conclusion, and have formed a very high estimate both of their teaching and its practical effects. As it would not be just, in a matter of such importance, that sentence should go by default between the accuser and the accused, the following pages have been put together—it is hoped in no unchristian or unkind spirit—for the purpose of enquiring whether the charge, and the several allegations by which it is supported in the review, are true or false.

Supposing them to be true, it may well indeed be questioned whether the movement has not been rather the cause of “a burden than a blessing.”<sup>1</sup> If they are false, or if facts have been so coloured as to create a false impression, it is desirable that the truth should be vindicated, and brought clearly to light.

What, then, are the arguments by which the reviewer attempts to substantiate the charge to which I have referred?

Speaking of the “marvellous growth of schism,” he computes that “whereas at George I.’s death (1727), the proportion of Dissenters to Churchmen was nearer 1 to 25 than 1 to 20, as in 1700, by 1800 it was computed to be 1 to 4, and the four Protestant sects had become legion.”<sup>2</sup>

“The tyranny of the government” sufficiently accounts, he says, “for the prostration of the Church; the Court patronage of such men as Dr. Clarke accounts for the spread of Unitarian doctrine;” but for the growth of schism during the remaining sixty years of the century some further cause must be assigned.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Review*, p. 347.

<sup>2</sup> Page 339.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

What, then, in the judgment of the reviewer, was the cause of the mischief? "The conclusion," he says, "is forced upon us, that it was professed Churchmen who thus" (i. e. in a marvellous manner) "rent the unity of the Church. It was the legitimate outcome" of the teaching of the Evangelical school; "a fact which many Evangelicals . . . were proud to avow."<sup>1</sup> "In 1800 they could boast,"—as if it were not merely a result, but to themselves a matter of self-glorification—that such had been the result of their labours; viz. "that they had alienated from the Church the greater portion of the people, and had increased the number of meeting houses from 35 to nearly 1000."<sup>2</sup> At the opening of the nineteenth century the results of the Evangelical movement were fully developed. "It had reanimated the old denominations, it had filled their chapels, it had supplied very largely their pulpits, and, in addition, it had called into existence a multitude of novel sects. . . . Can there be a greater delusion than the popular notion that the Evangelicals revived the Church?" But this was far from being all the ills that these men wrought. "While no fresh institutions were devised to invigorate and give life to the Church . . . numerous organisations were established to hinder and embarrass her work."<sup>3</sup> To them, and to them alone, the apathy, the deadness, the abuses within the bosom of the Church are to be ascribed. "Vast as were the evils they entailed on their communion by the increase of sectarianism and the establishment of hostile societies, they were hardly less guilty in the way of omission. Not an abuse existing in the reign of Queen Anne had been abated in the year 1800. The scandals of non-residence and pluralities were greater than ever."

During the horrors of the French Revolution "the clergy" (of our Church), by which phrase, as the context shows, he must be supposed to mean the Evangelical clergy, "had been expending all their strength and energy in defying Church discipline, discrediting Church teaching, and building up a Babel of sects. If nothing else," says the reviewer, "were alleged, it is a sufficient condemnation of this powerful section of Churchmen, to say that hardly a church had been built in London for seventy years."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Page 340.<sup>2</sup> Page 344.<sup>3</sup> Page 354.<sup>4</sup> Page 347.

“Will any impartial person deny,” says the reviewer, exulting, it would seem, in the conviction that he had unanswerably proved his point, that, “great as were the evils of Walpole’s tyranny, and those of the Arian school with its deadening influence, the deepest and most incurable were due to the misdirected zeal and energy of the fathers of the Evangelical school,—their utter ignorance of all that is meant by Church principles in general, and of loyalty to the Anglican Church in particular?”<sup>1</sup> Such were their sins of omission and commission; and no wonder; considering how far, if the opinion of the reviewer be correct, they had gone astray from the teaching of the Church to which they professed to belong, and having regard to the spirit by which, though perhaps unconsciously to themselves, they were inwardly moved.

“To act in the spirit of the Prayer Book,” he observes,<sup>2</sup> “was to condemn utterly all their teaching and practice;” not a portion only of it, be it observed, but all they taught, and all they did.<sup>3</sup> Admitting that they were “men of zeal and piety,” he boldly affirms, as if he were cognizant of the secrets of men’s hearts, that “they drew their inspirations from their own imaginations, instead of from the divine teaching and divine discipline of the Church of God.”<sup>4</sup>

We have now, then, the whole case brought before us, what they did, what they left undone, and what were the motives and impulses to which we may trace all their proceedings.

The Evangelical movement, says the plaintiff in this suit, is the chief cause of the vast increase of nonconformity that has taken place in this kingdom in the last century. By the open encouragement of Dissent (of which he lays some instances before the Court), by the utter inconsistency of its principles and the practice of its leaders with the spirit of the Church,<sup>5</sup> they so patted it on the back, and showed their approbation of its schismatical proceedings, that they alone must be held responsible for its growth. This is the argument of the plaintiff in the case.

What has the defendant to say in reply? He may say perhaps, in general terms; Since the year 1832 there have been two other movements, which have caused great excitement in

<sup>1</sup> Pages 353-355.<sup>2</sup> Page 355.<sup>3</sup> Page 356.<sup>4</sup> Page 357.<sup>5</sup> Page 356.

the Church. At no period in our history since the Reformation has Romanism made such progress in Great Britain. In 1850, presuming upon this growth, and flattering himself that this progress was an indication of a change in national feeling, the Pope thought fit to take a step, never before heard of, of establishing certain pretended provinces, sees, and dioceses. In the following year an Act of Parliament was passed rebuking this arrogance on his part, and forbidding the assumption of ecclesiastical titles connected with them. We have now, resident amongst us, a cardinal, who calls himself Archbishop of Westminster, and exercises an official authority which our forefathers would not have tolerated for a moment. We have twelve Roman Catholic bishops in England alone, to say nothing of other parts of the Queen's dominions.<sup>1</sup> Never before have so many clergymen, within the same limited period, renounced the Anglican ministry and entered the Church of Rome. Noblemen of the highest rank have of late submitted to its yoke. Roman Catholic chapels, convents, and nunneries are now scattered over all the land. And it is certain that the number of Romanists is very largely increased. All this, the Counsel for the defendant might say, is owing to the Oxford movement of 1832, and the Ritualistic movement that succeeded it. It is true, he might add, My learned brother on the other side admits that in some cases mistakes have been made by the two parties referred to, but he maintains that these were matters of course; the incautious expressions of a new-born zeal, not deliberate acts of principle, nor proofs of an erroneous system. But I cannot assent to these excuses, nor admit the validity of the plea. I hold the fathers of these movements to be the causes of all the mischief. One of them bears a name which manifestly points to this conclusion in the popular mind. And it is an axiom that *Vox populi est vox Dei*. Should Romanism continue to advance during the present century, as you say Dissent did during the last, those who come after us may safely affirm that the fathers of these movements chiefly succeeded<sup>2</sup> in causing an increase of Romanism without, and of a Romanising spirit within the pale of the Church.

Such, as a matter of fact, is the way in which a vast number

<sup>1</sup> See the *Catholic Directory* for 1877.

<sup>2</sup> Page 318.

of persons do argue, with a full conviction that it is a conclusive argument in both cases. If the English Church Union takes the former course, the Church Association may most assuredly take the other. "An impartial person,"<sup>1</sup> instead of drawing the conclusion which the reviewer believes to be undeniable, will probably think that both arguments are equally valid, or that the last is more convincing than the first. But how deplorable a thing it is that a Church Review, which came forth with a flourish of trumpets as such, should condescend to be used as the bellows for thus miserably blowing up the flames of our party contentions.

"Non tali auxilio, nec defensoribus istis  
Tempus eget."

To make the Evangelical movement responsible for the continued existence of the ecclesiastical abuses which had come down from the reign of Queen Anne, for the scandals of non-residence and pluralities, for the fact that not one church in London had been built for seventy years,<sup>2</sup> yes, and even for the inferences drawn from the Census Returns of illegitimate births in those parts of the kingdom "where the Evangelical body worked most diligently,"<sup>3</sup> is so palpably absurd, that one wonders how anyone could dare to face the indignant smile, which such a tissue of exaggerations could not fail to evoke. And who that loves our Church, who that fears and confesses in secret "the great danger we are in from our unhappy divisions," and humbly beseeches Almighty God that "we may lay that danger to heart, and that he would take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatsoever else may hinder us from godly union and concord," can do otherwise than wonder at the fact, that a magazine professing to have the interests of our Church in view, should have taken this special opportunity of raking up everything discreditable—even if it were true—that could possibly be cast upon a movement, which so many Churchmen regard as having been a providential instrument for rekindling the spiritual life of our country and our Church, and thereby having called down upon us unnumbered blessings? In the *Guardian* of August 15th, we read that a very im-

<sup>1</sup> Page 355.

<sup>2</sup> Page 347.

<sup>3</sup> Page 353.

portant meeting had just been held at Lambeth Palace. It was of a devotional character, convened for the purpose of considering the best mode of encouraging and extending the spirit of prayer for the Holy Spirit's guidance to the Church at the present time. There is, I believe, no doubt that the meeting originated in the anxious desire of one eminently pious and practical incumbent, of the so-called High Church party, to heal our lamentable dissensions. It was, we have good reason to suppose, his heartfelt conviction that the best effects would follow upon the combined action of the different members of the "one body," begun in a spirit of dependence on the Blessed Spirit, and carried on with the continued recognition of the power of prayer. But it was in no sense a party meeting. Bishops and clergy met together, not as advocates of High Church, or Low Church, theories or practices, but to consider how those whose office it is to win sinners to Christ, might best heal the wounds which controversy has inflicted upon us, and *that* unity be best promoted amongst us, which our Lord Himself has pointed out as the real method of convincing an unbelieving world of the truth of His own mission, and bringing men to acknowledge the preciousness of the Gospel.<sup>1</sup> Doubtless many of those present must have read this article of the *Church Quarterly Review*. What a contrast between the tone of it, and the avowed purpose of that Christian assembly! With what possible hope of good results, if their indignant feelings were not overborne by the charity that hopeth all things, must those who are commonly associated with the Low Church party, have met those who by common reputation belong to the other, if they imagined that these their brethren entertained any sympathy with the tone and language of the review!

What a pang must have been felt by the excellent promoter of the meeting, that the offensive imputations of the review should have been cast upon good and holy men, whose friends he hoped to enlist in a joint crusade against the infidelity and the ungodliness of the age! The article must, I think, be deemed no less impolitic and injurious to the best interests of the Church than it is ungenerous and unjust.

To refute the grave accusations alleged against the Evan-

<sup>1</sup> St. John xvii. 21.

gical movement, there is no need whatever to approve of everything said or done by the good men with whom it originated, or by whom it was afterwards carried on. After all, they were but men, and men of like infirmity with their fellow creatures. But the movement commenced under very peculiar circumstances, and they would have been more than men, if they or their followers had invariably acted with perfect wisdom and discretion. St. Peter himself on one occasion was so far seduced by the temptation which beset him, that St. Paul withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.<sup>1</sup>

We reverence the memory of Cranmer because he gave his body to be burned, rather than exhibit him to scorn and reproach, because in a moment of weakness he signed a recantation of the faith he had formerly professed.

In estimating the character of Laud and his associates, and the influence exercised by them upon the interests of the Church, the High Church party do not, I imagine, judge of them by the severities of the Star Chamber, but shut their eyes to the intolerance which it is impossible to excuse. For example, in the autobiography of the archbishop we find the following memoranda :

“1637. June 14. This day Jo. Bastwick, Doctor of Physic, Henry Burton, Bachelor of Divinity, and William Prynne, Barrister at Law, were censured for their libels against the hierarchy of the Church.”

“June 30, Friday, the above-named libellers *left their ears*,” i. e. having had them cut off by the sentence of that abominable Court.

“July 7. Friday. A note was brought to me, of a short libel posted on the cross in Cheapside ; that the Arch-Wolf of Cant. had his hand in persecuting the saints, and shedding the blood of the Martyrs.”<sup>2</sup>

The editor of the volume tells us in his preface, that “the stamp of Laud’s influence is yet visible upon the Church.”

Possibly the ‘Church Quarterly Review’ may be of opinion that in all respects it was a salutary influence. Be it so. It cannot, however, deny that some excuse must be made for Laud’s proceedings. Such, at least, was the feeling of the publisher

<sup>1</sup> Gal. ii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Autobiography*, etc., Oxford, 1839.



of his autobiography. In apology for them, he observes, that "to look at such an one on the mere surface of history"—which, I suppose, would be the view naturally taken by those who concur with the Cheapside libeller—"is to view him in one posture only; one, too, which he has not taken up of himself, but which the troubles of high place and a distempered generation have compelled him to assume. . . . In hard and unkind times, and besides all this, with the care of many churches,—a weight of which an Apostle spoke as though it were a great thing even to him,—he bore a heavy cross within his crosier, and went with it stoutly to his martyrdom."

I quote this to show that the apologist of Laud thinks, as all reasonable men also think, that before one passes judgment upon an historic personage whose influence has long survived his personal existence, the circumstances of his age ought to be taken into account. The reviewer must be supposed to have come to a different conclusion; at any rate he certainly has not acted as if he had himself adopted this rule of judgment. He has taken a decidedly one-sided view of an eminent body of men, whose influence is still felt in the Church, and hastily condemned them without making any allowances whatever for the circumstances in which they were placed.

On page 304 he favours his readers with an enumeration of divers acts of indiscretion committed, as he states, by Mr. Venn of Huddersfield, and others, as an illustration of the modes in which they favoured the growth of Dissent. Taking his facts for granted, we may, and ought to, admit that those particular acts did tend to the encouragement of schism. It is deeply to be regretted that zeal should so far have outrun discretion. But must we assume also, that this was the general course adopted by the fathers of the Evangelical body? And even supposing it were in many more instances than the reviewer has placed on record, is it to be wondered at, when we consider the circumstances in which they were placed, and the contempt and persecution—for so it may fairly be called—which they had to bear in the prosecution of their work?

Experience teaches us that in every great national movement, political or religious, the same results are found to ensue. Calm and judicious counsels will not always prevail.

When momentous interests are either supposed to be, or really are at stake, the impetuous feelings of poor human nature are too ready to call down fire from heaven upon those who are on the contrary side to our own. What wonder, then, if in the midst of the struggles of the eighteenth century, when the life of religion was all but extinct throughout the land, and God was pleased in His goodness to stir up a band of zealous and faithful men, who knew the value of immortal souls and were burning with a desire to rekindle the flame of Evangelical truth, which they well knew was the only means of bringing the dead to life, they should sometimes have been carried away by the fervour of their feelings, and committed themselves to acts which a bystander of cooler temperament might justly condemn?

Let us see whether the reviewer has made no more allowance for mistakes and circumstances in the case of another party, with which it may be assumed that he has far greater sympathy, than he has done for the Evangelical clergy.

About forty years ago, as I have before observed, a second theological movement took place in England, which greatly disturbed the peace of the Church; a movement by some as loudly condemned, as by others it was heartily approved.

The reviewer himself is loud in his praises of the spirit which evoked the *Tracts for the Times*. In the contrast between the authors of the Tracts and those who had preceded them, he assumes that, under the influence of the Evangelical party, the doctrines plainly set forth in the services of the Church had ceased to exercise any living power upon its members. He says that the authors of the Tracts had asked themselves whether these doctrines "were intended to be so many dead letters, or whether they were precious truths to be taught by the minister, as he would answer to God; whether the rubrics were words without meaning or laws, which priest and people were alike bound to obey,"<sup>1</sup> implying that such had been the teaching and the practice of the Evangelical body, and *that* up to the year 1832. *They* (the authors of the Tracts) had come to the very right conclusion, as the reviewer represents, and as every true Churchman will admit, that these doctrines were to be cordially accepted, and these rubrics honestly obeyed. In furtherance of this, their

<sup>1</sup> Page 355.

very proper belief, they published these Tracts, intending thereby to regenerate the Church. What they so deeply felt and believed they boldly affirmed, doing everything to persuade others to accept their views. In short, they did, according to their own convictions, exactly what the Evangelical party had done a century before. They threw their heart into the work, and sought by every possible means to carry out the purpose they had in view.

Was it the case then, in the reviewer's estimation, that all the conclusions of these men, whose honest convictions and burning zeal he paints in such glowing colours, were discreet and wise? No; by no means. He candidly admits respecting *them*, that "of course"—why of course, unless such a result was to be expected under circumstances of great excitement, as a necessary consequence of the imperfection of human nature?—"of course," he says, "there was occasional error and hastiness of conclusions."<sup>1</sup> But for these aberrations he can find a ready apology. "Nevertheless," he goes on to say, "the great purpose was achieved; they rallied round what they believed was a divine institution, the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth; they were invigorated by a new spirit, and worked for another end. One thought animated every breast, and one cry was raised by every voice. *Pro Ecclesiâ Dei.*"<sup>2</sup>

In the case of the Tracts, then, strength of persuasion and apparent success, evidenced by the wide adoption of their principles, may be thrown as a cloak over "occasional error and hastiness of conclusions." But for Berridge and Grimshaw, and Venn of Huddersfield, and others,<sup>3</sup> whose lot had been cast in the valley of dry bones, and who, rightly or wrongly, deemed it their mission to prophesy upon those bones, and say unto them, "O, ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord;" and who *did* go forth and revived throughout the land the spiritual life, which, as the reviewer admits, had been withering under the tyrannical policy of the State, and the deadening influence of Arianism, not a syllable of excuse is suggested in palliation of any extravagances into which they, or some of them—for it is not assumed of all—were unwarily betrayed. The greater part of them, for anything that appears, may have

<sup>1</sup> Pages 355, 356.

<sup>2</sup> Page 356.

<sup>3</sup> Page 340.

lamented this excess and misdirection of zeal as much as the reviewer himself. Of course I cannot say they did. But in throwing mud upon a large body of men, it is not too hastily to be taken for granted that they all deserved to be put in the pillory, and made the objects of such contemptuous treatment, because some things were done by somebody, which all persons of good sense agree to condemn.

From the action, then, of the reviewer himself towards men whom he admires, it might be fairly inferred that circumstances ought to be taken into consideration before sentence is passed upon Mr. Venn and others for the measure of encouragement, which by their personal acts they gave to Dissent.

Instead, moreover, of regarding the facts which he specifies as being in any respect exceptional, or the perpetuation of them to have been limited in point of time to a few years, he proceeds to travel over our Church history to the very end of the century, and beyond it, in order to prove the allegation which he had undertaken to substantiate. For anything the reviewer has said to the contrary, the misdeeds particularly mentioned may be taken by his readers as specimens of what went on to the year 1801, or 1832, wherever the Evangelical party succeeded in gaining the ascendancy. It might be concluded that, according to the habitual course of the Evangelical movement, congregations would be exhorted to build meeting houses, and to frequent them when built; clergymen in full canonicals would still be seen holding the plate at meeting-house doors, and their converts becoming, I suppose it is meant with *their* approbation, Dissenting ministers.

Would it not have been more ingenuous if he had given his readers some reason to believe that if they should perchance imagine this to have been the case, they would lie under a very great mistake? Of course I am aware that a good deal might be said, and in fact has been said, of the want of decency and order which was exhibited in many of our churches during the eighteenth century, as contrasted with the more becoming propriety of our own day. But admitting this—though I believe the amount of it has been not a little exaggerated<sup>1</sup>—why should

<sup>1</sup> See Three Addresses delivered by the Bishop of Llandaff to his Clergy, 1875, pp. 57-60.

this laxity of practice be exclusively ascribed to the Evangelical clergy? Is it certain that order and decency always and everywhere prevailed where Evangelical doctrine, though heard from the desk, was rarely or never preached in the pulpit? That this irreverence was very general, being one of the melancholy results of that decay of national piety, which had itself called the Evangelical movement into existence, and that it was as common in the churches which were accounted Orthodox, as it was in others, there can be no reasonable doubt. To confine it to one section of the Church may well serve the purposes of an advocate, who is retained to make out a case; but it must not be accepted as a substitute for demonstrative proof.

But another point to be observed in reference to this matter is, that there had been great advances towards a decent ceremonial and orderly performance of divine worship throughout the land during the latter part of the century; a fact which an "impartial person"<sup>1</sup> could not fail to have referred to, however it might suit the purpose of the reviewer to say nothing about it.

Whatever may have been the failings of the actual fathers of the Evangelical movement, it would be untrue to say, and is unfair by silence to imply, that such acts as he specifies were continued to the end of the century; or that the minor evil of irregularities in the ministration of the offices of the Church followed as of necessity from their "mistaken course." No charge of the kind can be brought against such men as the Rev. John Venn, Josiah Pratt, Archdeacon Dealtry, Daniel Wilson, and many others who intervened between them and the first generation. With regard to the Rev. Henry Venn himself, who stands prominently in the reviewer's list of culprits, his son tells us somewhat of his feelings in his later days. "Induced," he says, "by the hope of doing good, my father, in certain instances, preached in unconsecrated places. But, having acknowledged this, it becomes my pleasing duty to say that he was no advocate for irregularity in others; that when he afterwards considered it in its different bearings and connections, he lamented that he had given way to it, and restrained several other persons from such acts by the most cogent argu-

<sup>1</sup> Page 355.

ments." These are the words of his son, the Rev. John Venn.<sup>1</sup> The biographer of Lady Huntingdon<sup>2</sup> dissents, indeed, from this exculpation, and gives the reasons why he does not accept it. But though he asserts that Mr. Venn continued in the same undeviating line in which he commenced in 1755, he does not hint at any other irregularities than "faithful ministrations in Lady Huntingdon's chapels, in private houses, and occasionally in the open air." With respect to Lady Huntingdon's chapels, it was not till after July 1777 that the Consistorial Court of London decided that those chapels were dissenting places of worship.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Venn lived till June 1797, and his grandson tells us, that after this sentence was pronounced, he no longer officiated in them. Up to that time, then, he must be supposed to have believed, as others did, that by doing so he was not committing a legal offence. His son, the Rev. John Venn, may be well accepted as the best interpreter of his feelings. If after 1777 he did no more than preach in unconsecrated places, the action of the High Church party of the present day in their missions and open-air preachings might be set by the *Church Quarterly Review* in the opposite scale. The Church has at last found out that if she would successfully combat with the difficulties of the times, she must give additional elasticity to some of her rules. When it was observed in a *Church Review*, some fifty years ago or more, that the parish of St. Pancras contained (I think it was said) sixty thousand souls, and that the parish church would hold three hundred, whose piety would bear the squeeze, perhaps it would have been well if she had even then found out the expediency of so doing. It is a good omen for her future career that she has amended the Act of Uniformity of Charles II. Without excusing everything that was done by Mr. Venn and others in the middle of the last century, we might have expected that some of their proceedings would be less harshly judged of in the present day than they were by some in their own.

An anecdote related in Carus's *Life of Mr. Simcon*<sup>4</sup> faith-

<sup>1</sup> See *Life of Rev. H. Venn*, by his Grandson, fifth edition, p. 177.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. i. p. 291.

<sup>3</sup> See *Life of Lady Huntingdon*, vol. ii. pp. 307, 308.

<sup>4</sup> Page 278.

fully depicts the feelings of the then leaders of the body, as to the charge of unbecoming fraternisation with Dissent. In his Memoir, written in 1813, he mentions the means he had adopted long before of ascertaining whether any of his congregation were in danger of being drawn away by dissenters,<sup>1</sup> and says, moreover, "In the thirty years that I have ministered at Trinity Church, the dissenters have not, as far as I recollect, drawn away three, whom I was not glad to get rid of."<sup>2</sup> Surely these words could hardly have been penned by one, to whom as an individual, or to whose colleagues, animated, it is to be supposed, by the same spirit as himself, it could possibly be "*a boast*" in 1800, as the reviewer intimates it might be, "that they had alienated from the Church the greater part of the people."<sup>3</sup>

To the facts enumerated by him on page 344 I have called especial attention, because there is no need to conceal or deny them with a view to the refutation of the charge that the Evangelical movement succeeded chiefly in the propagation of Dissent. Let the whole truth be told. It is to be hoped that these cases were but few in number. Even under the circumstances in which those good men found themselves—circumstances which will be hereafter fully explained—true wisdom would have counselled a patient waiting upon God rather than the taking a step that might lead eventually to a greater amount of strife and division. Is it to be supposed for a moment that the vast increase of Dissent, of which he gives us so nice a calculation, could have resulted from the acts to which he refers? If they had been the habitual practice of the Evangelical party, he might have had good reasons to lay this consequence at their door. But for such an association no proof is adduced, and it would be sought in vain.

For not a few of their faults—extravagant as they appeared to the Orthodox party in the Church in those days, and for which they were loudly denounced as disloyal Churchmen—a very sufficient excuse is to be found in the practices of those who are now doing the very things which their own party at one time so loudly condemned.

Let anyone read the fourth chapter of a lately published

<sup>1</sup> Page 139.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Page 344.

volume, entitled *Twenty-one Years in St. George's Mission*. While disagreeing most entirely from its theology in some important particulars, which I believe not to be the theology of the Church of England, I should be sorry not to recognise the zeal, the Christian love, the self-denial, and hearty desire to save souls, which must have suggested, and have supported the mission.

But what would our forefathers, the good Orthodox Churchmen of the last century—who were so shocked at the erratic ministrations of the Evangelical clergy—have thought of “the open-air preaching—the way of the Cross—the special missions,” the services on New Year’s Eve, and the funerals, of which we have a record in that chapter? They might perhaps have doubted whether these were not the services of the Church of Rome. Assuredly nothing would have convinced them that they were the offices of their own.

But, to say no more upon these asserted manifestations of a Dissenting spirit in the fathers of the Evangelical movement, let us consider another very grave accusation which is here brought against them.

While “no fresh institutions,” says the reviewer, “were devised to invigorate and give life to the Church—while from the two venerable societies, memorials of better times, ALL support had been withheld, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel receiving from all sources the paltry income of hardly 7000*l.* per annum—numerous organisations were established”—which of course must mean by the Evangelical body, for, unless this means by them, or under their influence, there seems no reason for alluding here to the fact of these organisations being set on foot—“to hinder and embarrass her work.”<sup>1</sup> As if *they* alone were responsible for the non-existence of fresh institutions calculated to invigorate and give life to the Church; as though the wealth of the country, by which the Society referred to might have been duly supported, had been entirely at *their* disposal. And how can the reviewer dare to say that *all* support had been withdrawn from it—meaning of course by “these men,” whom he had just mentioned, or through their influence? Does he venture then to affirm from his own know-

<sup>1</sup> Pages 353, 354.



ledge, or from credible testimony, that everyone of them had forsaken it, that none of them contributed to this sum of 7000*l.*? And can he tell us, moreover, what a reception they would probably have met with, if they had sought for incorporation in one or other of these venerable societies at a time when to be an Evangelical was, in the eyes of many of the supporters of them, tantamount to being an enemy of the Church? The writer of these pages well remembers the fact of its being currently reported in Cambridge, that Bishop Blomfield had put the question to Mr. Simeon, Why he was not a member of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge? and that Mr. S. had replied, that he apprehended he should be black-balled if his name were proposed; upon which the Bishop made the offer of himself proposing him, which would have, he believed, the effect of counteracting the feeling that was supposed to exist. I do not vouch for the story, but I do know it to be a fact, that Mr. Simeon was proposed by Bishop Blomfield, then Bishop of Chester, in February 1826, and that he was elected in the following month. Some words, however, of Mr. Simeon himself give great probability to the story.

Writing in 1812, in answer to Dr. (afterwards Bishop) Marsh, Mr. Simeon observes, "As it is possible that a circumstance relating to myself may give you occasion to represent me as no friend to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge"—the very thing, be it observed, which the reviewer is here doing with respect to the sister society—"I once had the honour of being a member of that Society myself; but, afterwards, for reasons which appeared to me satisfactory at the time, I withdrew my name. Altering, however, my opinion some time after, *about twenty years ago* I wished to renew my subscription; and the late Dean of Ely, Dr. Cooke, then Provost of King's College, had undertaken to propose me. But on mentioning it to the Rev. Secretary of that Society, he found a doubt suggested whether my name would be readmitted. Of course, I did not choose to be proposed if there was the smallest chance of a repulse; and have been deterred from offering myself by that consideration ever since. But though I have not offered myself, I nearly two years ago recommended my brother to become a member, and if you, sir, will do me the honour to propose me

. . . I shall be happy in being again united to that Society, and in co-operating in all their benevolent designs.”<sup>1</sup> From the circumstance of his not being reunited to it till 1826, it may be supposed that Dr. Marsh did not think fit to propose him. The alternative would be that he was proposed and rejected.

The reviewer may perhaps reply, What has this to do with the present question? All this, he may say, may have happened in the nineteenth century, and be quite irrelevant to the matter in hand. Then why, it may fairly be retorted, has he himself thought fit *ad invidiam* to introduce into the discussion these various organisations of the later date? If we are to have part of the story, let us have the whole. Besides which there is no doubt that, if we were to ransack the records of the eighteenth century, as the reviewer has done, we should find that the fathers of the movement were looked upon by the High Churchmen of their generation much in the same light as Mr. Simeon was at a later date. They were regarded as disturbers of the peace—the peace of spiritual death which then brooded over the land—their names were cast out as evil; they were despised and tabooed as disloyal to the Church, which they were striving with all their hearts to quicken into a wholesome and vigorous life.

But to speak more particularly of these “numerous organisations,” they were “established to hinder and embarrass her work,”<sup>2</sup> says the reviewer.

Upon these words I am unwilling to put the worst of the two interpretations of which they are capable. If they mean that the very purpose and object of them was that they might have this effect, it can only be considered a most unworthy accusation, impossible to be proved, and, as I believe, not having a shadow of foundation. It is to be hoped, however, that they were intended to imply nothing more, than that in the judgment of the reviewer such would be their indirect but certain and necessary result.

The choice of interpretation lies, then, between the supposed candour of the reviewer, and the value of his opinion. This must be left to everyone who reads the whole of the review, to determine for himself.

With regard to the special institutions of the nineteenth

<sup>1</sup> CARUS'S *Life*, p. 605.

<sup>2</sup> Page 354.

century, which were one of the developments, as it is asserted,<sup>1</sup> of the Evangelical movement, it may not be amiss to say a few words.

It is well known that the institution of the Bible Society was simply owing to the fact that the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge had been unable to supply the wants of Wales, which Mr. Charles, of Bala, had brought to their notice, and requested them to relieve. How it could have been established "to hinder and embarrass" that Society, or with any deliberate purpose, if that is intended to be implied, of "discrediting the interpretation of the Church, and encouraging great freedom of thought,"<sup>2</sup> it is utterly impossible to conceive. It was formed, says the Rev. Henry Soames, in 1804, "and it secured the patronage of the Bishops Porteus, Barrington, and Burgess, who were all very highly respected among the prelates of their day."<sup>3</sup> How treacherous must these good prelates have been, if they knowingly joined with others in this attempt! How short-sighted and unworthy of their position, if they could not predict the consequence of the project, which they were induced to support!

The other societies are the Religious Tract Society, the Church Missionary Society, and the British and Foreign School Society, which last, it is said, "while largely supported by Churchmen, was so ordered, in an irreligious era, as to exclude the doctrines of the Church."<sup>4</sup>

That the "Churchmen" who thus "largely supported" the School Society, or that the founder of, or subscribers to the Tract Society, belonged to the Evangelical party, no proof is here given, and I have no means of ascertaining whether they did or not.<sup>5</sup> Probably many of them were subscribers to the one, or supporters of the other: but is it not most unwarrantable to assume, as the writer does in the next sentence, that these societies, "hostile," as he asserts, "to the Church," and, as before said, "established to hinder and embarrass her work," were "established by this party, and this party alone"?

If the Bible Society was called into existence in consequence of the inability of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge

<sup>1</sup> Page 353.

<sup>2</sup> Page 354.

<sup>3</sup> Additions to MOSHEIM'S *Ecclesiastical History*, 1841, vol. iv. p. 507.

<sup>4</sup> Page 354.

<sup>5</sup> My impression is that Lankester was a Quaker.

adequately to supply even the wants of our own countrymen, and if religiously minded men, who were anxious for the spiritual welfare of the poor, felt that some other agency was needed in those days to provide the lower classes with something more than the meagre and unattractive publications, which could then be obtained from the Depository in Bartlett's Buildings, surely the blame, if it were a fault, might be more equitably distributed among Churchmen of different opinions, than be laid exclusively upon one party to the entire exculpation of the other. The best reply to the insinuation is to be found in the numerous and excellent books and tracts, which are now upon the shelves of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. If the Society failed to supply the market, what else could the purchaser do than to supply himself in some other way?

That the Church Missionary Society was at its origin founded for evangelising the heathen "on principles opposed to those of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel;" that "it was carefully hedged round by safeguards to secure it from being controlled and influenced by the Church,"<sup>1</sup> is asserted, but nothing is said in proof of the assertion. If it be true, where are these safeguards to be found? Are they publicly expressed in any of its statements as to its constitution, or are they deposited amongst its archives? The subscribers to the Society, I suspect, are as little aware of them as some of the members of the Society of the Holy Cross have lately professed themselves to have been, of the existence of the *Priest in Absolution*.

At any rate with the establishment of the Society, whatever be its merits or its faults, the *fathers* of the Evangelical movement, whichever of the two senses that have been given to the phrase we choose to adopt, had nothing to do.

It was founded in 1799, under a deep conviction that the *Church, as such*, ought to do more than was then being done, to fulfil the command of our Lord, to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.<sup>2</sup>

The sphere that was selected for its labours certainly indicated no intention of antagonism to the older society, the charter of which, granted in 1701, recites that it was intended for the religious instruction of the subjects of the Crown in the planta-

<sup>1</sup> Page 354.

<sup>2</sup> See note on p. 51.

tions, colonies, and factories of Great Britain, and for the propagation of the Gospel in those parts. The younger Association seems carefully to have avoided collision with its operations, advisedly selecting another field of labour, and entitling itself "The Society for Missions to Africa and the East."

If the antagonism, which in this particular case is not merely insinuated, but openly affirmed, were really intended, it is certainly very unaccountable that the Society should have adopted a title so little in accordance with its malevolent designs. Though it now calls itself "The Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East," its original designation, having in addition to the above-recited words, "Instituted by Members of the Established Church," bore upon its very front a distinct avowal, that it was intended by its members to act upon the principles of the Church, and to aid it in its missionary operations.

But further than this, "it was formed, as its Committee stated in 1865, in the year 1799, by members of the Established Church, who felt the obligation to seek the conversion to Christianity, as exhibited in the doctrines and discipline of that Church," (not of the Colonies, be it observed, but) "of those nations which are ignorant of the true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent. Its measures were, in the first instance, submitted to the notice of the then Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London, from whose answers the Society was encouraged to go forward, being assured that its proceedings would be regarded with candour."<sup>1</sup>

It can hardly be supposed that the Archbishop of Canterbury and Bishop of London would have given this encouragement had they supposed that the Society would "hinder and embarrass the Church." They knew that the object, at least, was a good and holy one. They did not anticipate any antagonism between the two societies. In the piety that had suggested the conception they probably thought they had a guarantee for true Christian principle. In the very title that was submitted to them, as denoting the lines upon which it intended to work, they beheld a pledge of good Churchmanship.

<sup>1</sup> Address appended to a pamphlet by Rev. H. Venn, entitled *Retrospect and Prospect of the Operations of the Church Missionary Society.*

So much, then, may be said respecting the original purposes of the Society, in which I am myself unable to detect any hostility either to the older Society or the Church.

To vindicate the intentions of the excellent men—not, as was before observed, the fathers of the Evangelical movement, but the good men of the second generation who held their principles—from the charges of the reviewer, is not of necessity to express an unqualified approbation of all the proceedings of the Society in later years. For those proceedings *they* are not to be held responsible. In founding a society for preaching the Gospel among the heathen, it is probable that they did not anticipate that so copious a blessing would be bestowed on their own labours, and those of other agencies in the course of fifty or seventy years, that Churches would be formed in heathen lands, requiring and actually possessing that organisation, which “it is evident unto all men, diligently reading the Holy Scripture and ancient authors, (has existed) from the Apostles’ time.”<sup>1</sup> If, therefore, it did not occur to them to make provision for such a contingency, it is not to them that the blame is to be imputed, if the Society, under the altered circumstances of countries, wherein their operations have been carried on, has not so far modified the course of its action as to prevent the appearance of painful collision with Episcopal authority.

That the founders of the Church Missionary Society carefully hedged themselves by safeguards to secure themselves from being controlled by the constituted authorities of the Church, appears to me to be an assertion which no Christian man should have allowed himself to make. That they would, under the altered circumstances, have reconsidered their position, and, instead of endeavouring to exercise an independent power, have entered upon some other field of labour, where they might uninterruptedly have pursued the course which they had originally contemplated, is to myself far more easy to conceive, from the evidences that have come down to us of their personal piety, and dutiful reverence for their Church, than that they would have upheld their missionaries in resisting their bishop, even supposing that from youthfulness, and inexperience, and leanings to High Churchmanship, and under exaggerated notions of his rightful

<sup>1</sup> Preface to our Ordination Services in the *Book of Common Prayer*.

prerogatives, he had somewhat hastily claimed an undue exercise of his Episcopal jurisdiction.

Until I am furnished with some proof that the founders of the Church Missionary Society ever contemplated a power co-ordinate with that of a colonial bishop, either in the person of a missionary bishop in the same country, or as vested in a committee of presbyters and laymen at a distance, controlling his action, I must take leave to doubt that such could be the case.

To pursue the painful subject to which I have most reluctantly adverted, would be unsuitable to the real object of these pages. If the Church Missionary Society has to any extent erred in 1877, that is no reason for calumniating the excellent men, who laid its foundations in 1779, much less the fathers of the Evangelical movement. I will merely add that, if the correspondence of Bishop Wilson, one of its earliest and warmest friends, with the Society in 1835, shows that in his opinion a warning was necessary against an aggressive tendency, a not unnatural result of increasing influence and wealth, the reviewer has not been slow to avail himself of the indications of that tendency, which Bishop Wilson's words have placed in his hands.

Vast, however, as the mischief of these organisations has, in the opinion of the reviewer, been to the Church, another charge still remains. They (i. e. the fathers of the movement) not only entailed these evils on their communion, but "were hardly less guilty in the way of omission."<sup>1</sup>

In a former page<sup>2</sup> he had observed that "public catechising, universal at the opening of George I.'s reign, must have been a powerful means of instructing the people generally, and also of preserving the clergy from wandering from the faith." Very true. But then, who are to be blamed for the discontinuance of this useful practice? As usual, the fathers of the Evangelical movement. "Men could hardly tell the youth he had been made a child of God in baptism, and ascend the pulpit and deny it. May not the consciousness of this have operated to prevent the revival of catechising by the Evangelicals?" May not, it may be said with equal justice, any charge be brought against any individual, or any association, against which the

<sup>1</sup> Page 354.

<sup>2</sup> Page 348.

accuser has a grudge? Is the reviewer aware that the Rev. Griffith Jones, Rector of Llanddowror, in Carmarthenshire, and one of the fathers of the Evangelical movement, at least in the Principality of Wales,<sup>1</sup> was the author of a small volume entitled *The Christian Covenant, or the Baptismal Vow, as stated in our Church Catechism, Scripturally Explained by Questions and Answers*, which for many years was on the list of books published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and is, I believe, still there in the Welsh language? And has he never read in the Memoir of the Rev. Henry Venn, prepared by his son, that "he took great pains in catechising the young persons in his congregation, chiefly those who were above fourteen years old. The number was often very considerable; and he wrote out for their use a very copious explanation of the Church Catechism, in the way of Question and Answer"? If this was done by the Rev. Henry Venn, the supposition that it was done by others also of his party is, at least, as probable as the one that is most invidiously suggested in the review.

This, however, was not the only omission of the Evangelical party. It is, indeed, only put forward as a probability. But as direct and undeniable instances of their "guilt" in this respect, the reviewer immediately subjoins to the insinuation, "not an abuse existing in the reign of Queen Anne had been abated in the year 1800. The scandals of non-residence and pluralities were greater than ever."

Was the whole kingdom, then, so much under their influence that they could dictate to the Government of the country, or command the Legislature what laws it should pass, or what ecclesiastical abuses it should put a stop to? Or is there any

<sup>1</sup> See *Life of Lady Huntingdon*, vol. i. chap. vi. pp. 84, 85. For an interesting notice of the Rev. Griffith Jones, see *Wales*, a volume containing much valuable information by the late Sir Thomas Phillips, 1849, p. 273 *et seq.* The following words of his, written in 1744, will show both what he thought of catechising, and how far it was from his thoughts to alienate his countrymen from the Church. "May we not therefore hope, that reviving a prudent and familiar, instructive and engaging method of *catechising*, would be one good means, by the blessing of God, to retrieve the lustre and power again in our Established Church, and remove the indefensible reproach and scandal which arise from the gross immorality and ignorance of too many of our people." The reader will not fail to note that catechising was not much practised in South Wales in 1744, and what Mr. Jones thought at that time of Welsh morality and religious knowledge.



reason to suppose that, as a body, they so actively exerted themselves on the side of these abuses as to frustrate the efforts of the High Church party, who, it is equally necessary to suppose, had been manfully striving during the same time to correct them? If not, what can be more monstrous than thus to make the movement responsible for every evil and abuse that existed within the pale of the Church, and had been a dead weight upon it from the reign of Queen Anne? Abuses no doubt there were, notwithstanding the vast amount of Christian feeling and principle that had been stirred up by their teaching. But how could it be expected without a miracle that a nation would be born in a day? How could the good seed be expected all in a moment to bring forth its fruit? Has not our Lord himself taught us that in divine, as well as human affairs, one soweth, and another reapeth? With much more justice, as well as generosity, might it be said to the legislators and the reformers of the nineteenth century, "Other men laboured, and ye have entered into their labours." The mitigation or removal of ecclesiastical scandals by a later age must be ascribed in great part to the higher tone of society, which the revival of spiritual life through the instrumentality of these good and earnest men could not fail to produce, and which, as a matter of fact, it had diffused throughout the land before these reforms took place.

Surprised, as every intelligent reader must be, to find that the Evangelical body were the obstacle to ecclesiastical reform in these particulars, he will be much more so when he hears it alleged against them, as another sin of omission, that "at the close of the eighteenth century hardly a church had been built in London for seventy years. If nothing else were alleged, this fact," says the reviewer, is "a sufficient condemnation of this powerful section of Churchmen."<sup>1</sup>

In making this charge against the Evangelical clergy the reviewer is not a little unfortunate. He had previously told us that, if we except the last forty years of the present century, "never since the Reformation had the Church exhibited such exuberance of life as at the accession of Queen Anne."<sup>2</sup> It is quite true that in 1711 an Act of Parliament had been passed, granting to Her Majesty several duties upon coals for building

<sup>1</sup> Page 347.<sup>2</sup> Page 328.

fifty new churches in London; and two years after, another Act for rebuilding a parish church in the City. Whether any of the fifty were in lieu of churches which had been destroyed by the fire of London, or were all, strictly speaking, new churches, I have no information at hand. So far as Parliament represented public feeling, the Act did undoubtedly give some evidence of the life of which the reviewer speaks. But "of the proposed fifty churches only eleven were built, so grievously was this good intent frustrated in the performance."<sup>1</sup> Besides which it proves nothing as to the building of churches by private liberality, which has been an eminent characteristic of our own times, for these churches were to be paid for out of "several duties upon coals;" nor of the diffusion of a spirit of church building throughout the kingdom, for the operation of the Act was limited to a certain locality. But it happens that we have the testimony of a contemporary, Bishop Fleetwood, of St. Asaph, whose words, delivered in 1710, are quoted by Bishop Butler,<sup>2</sup> as bearing witness to the fact of the lamentable want of this very spirit. "Unless," he says, "the good public spirit of *building*, repairing, and adorning churches prevails a great deal more among us, and be more encouraged, an hundred years will bring to the ground an huge number of our churches." So little then did this exuberance of spiritual life show itself in this particular direction. And it is remarkable that Bishop Butler also in 1751 calls the attention of his clergy to "the importance of paying a proper regard to the structures which are consecrated to the service of God;" pointing out, moreover, as a special feature of the times, "a wonderful frugality in everything which has respect to religion, and extravagance in everything else." An age which could allow the "monuments of ancient piety to fall into ruin, instead of maintaining them in their original beauty and magnificence," which are the Bishop's words, would be little likely to follow the example of our pious forefathers in providing fresh churches for the increased population of the country.

In the year 1751 the influence of the Evangelical movement

<sup>1</sup> *Quarterly Review*, vol. xxiii. p. 553.

<sup>2</sup> *Charge to the Clergy of the Diocese of Durham, 1751.*

could not have been as yet very widely felt. It was not till 1747 that Henry Venn was ordained Deacon. Fletcher, of Madeley, ten years later. Toplady was born in 1740. Simeon in 1758. T. Scott in 1747. Wilberforce, whom the Evangelical party "claimed as their champion and their leader,"<sup>1</sup> in 1759. At the time, then, when the Charge was written, the need of such an admonition could hardly have been occasioned by the defective teaching of that party. Much, then, as we may regret that so little was done before the close of the century, why are they to have the burden of this defect laid exclusively on them? So far as infidelity and ungodliness prevailed, nothing less could be expected from the community at large. So far as religion influenced the professing members of the Church, it is only too clear that neither party had as yet turned its attention to this great necessity.<sup>2</sup> The reviewer, in support of his charge, appeals to "the sober practical English mind"<sup>3</sup> to justify his severe condemnation on this special sin of omission. One would suppose that if it had reflected so far upon the matter as to doubt "whether the Church was not rather a burden than a blessing to the nation," as the reviewer thinks the appearance of the kingdom might have induced it to do, it would have gone a little farther in its reasonings, and been tempted to include *all* its members in this charge of neglect, rather than pronounce the condemnation which is here so rashly passed upon one section of them, and that one most probably the least endowed

<sup>1</sup> Sir J. STEPHEN, *Essays*, p. 232.

<sup>2</sup> The truth is that it was not till after the conclusion of the great European war in 1815 that the eyes of Churchmen and statesmen were opened to the national danger we were incurring by this sad neglect. It was in 1818 that a Parliamentary Commission was appointed to make enquiry into the subject, and a million of money was put at the disposal of the Commissioners. A publication entitled *The Church in Danger; a Statement: and of the probable means of averting that danger*, by the Rev. R. Yates, B.D., was a principal means of awakening anxiety upon the subject. "Such a mine of heathenism, and consequent profligacy and danger," writes Mr. Yates, "cannot be contemplated without terror by any real and rational friend of our established government in Church and State, and is surely sufficient to awaken the anxious attention of every true patriot, every enlightened statesman, every sincere advocate of suffering humanity, and every intelligent and faithful Churchman." (See *Quarterly Review*, vol. xxiii. art. xii.) Alas! that after so much has been done, we have the same cause for sorrow and alarm.

<sup>3</sup> Page 347.

with the wealth and influence that might best have remedied the defect.

“Eheu !

Quàm temeré in nosmet legem sancimus iniquam.”<sup>1</sup>

Very frequent references are made in the course of the review to the doctrines and teaching of the Evangelical fathers. In one passage, for instance, that has already been cited, it is said that “to act in the spirit of the Prayer Book was to condemn all their teaching and practice.”

I am willing to believe that these oft-repeated charges against their doctrine may not have been meant really to imply all that, if they should be accepted in their literal signification, they would seem to convey. Perhaps the writer when he threw out these loose and random expressions, had some limitation in his mind, which exonerates him from the intention of imputing to these good men the inculcation of nothing but error and evil doing. But supposing these words to plead the excuse of having been incautiously uttered, it is nevertheless to be deeply lamented, that they were ever employed : and it may still not be amiss to contrast with them the candid and carefully weighed statement of one who will not be deemed a partisan on the Evangelical side, that the reader of the review may see what a very different estimate of their teaching has been formed by a competent, and certainly, in this instance, an impartial judge. “The revival,” says the Rev. W. D. Maclagan, i. e. the revival of spiritual life in England, “had continued in a remarkable order—first, the great Evangelical movement, to which the Church owed so much under God, and her debt to which she could never pay ; then the movement which was connected especially with Oxford, and which, as the former might be said to be the revival of Evangelical truth, so this might be said to be the revival of Apostolic order ; and, lastly, there had come in our own day the movement which had spread through the length and breadth of the Church, and which might be characterised as the revival of worship. These movements might be said to have grown out of each other in a marvellous order ; first, the revival of the great doctrines of Christian truth, the lifting up again in the midst of a dead or slumbering world of the cross of Christ ; then when souls had

<sup>1</sup> HOR. *Sat.* i. 3, 66.

been pointed to the source of salvation, God permitted the revival of the distinctive features of Church teaching such as made the Oxford movement so valuable; and, thirdly, in our own day the deeper earnestness, multiplied services, and more frequent communions had come in to crown the work."<sup>1</sup>

According to the reviewer, there cannot be "a greater delusion than the popular notion that the Evangelicals revived the Church."<sup>2</sup> In the opinion of Mr. Maclagan, the Church, under God, owes a debt (to them) which it can never pay.

The reviewer denounces the teaching of the Evangelical school in the strongest possible terms, whatever limitations he may intend us to put on his words. Mr. Maclagan characterises the movement as "the revival of the great doctrines of Christian truth, the lifting up again, in the midst of a dead or slumbering world, of the cross of Christ," and then traces the intimate connection of this with later movements in the Church; "the first, in the enunciation of the doctrine of forgiveness, *leading up to its natural working out in the growth of holiness of life.*"

Yes; it was indeed the preaching of the simple truths of the Gospel, the doctrines of the Reformation, that roused England from its torpor, as it had done two centuries before, and awoke that spirit of religious activity, of which the present one has witnessed so many happy results.

Whether the leaders of the second movement, in their desire to restore what they considered to be Catholic doctrine, always kept themselves within the lines of the theology of the Reformation—and whether the leaders of the third, or their followers, always have observed such moderation and sound judgment, and consideration for others, as to be entitled to throw stones at the Evangelical party, as the reviewer has done, on the ground of irregular proceedings, and, more particularly, in its earlier days, of fraternisation with Dissent, it is not necessary here to enquire.

Let it be admitted that improvement in Church order has marked the present century—that abuses have now at last been rectified and scandals been put away, may not this have followed from the fact of the dry bones having started into life, and the members of the Church, as a whole, having been roused by the preaching of Evangelical truth to a sense of its responsibilities?

<sup>1</sup> See the *Guardian* newspaper, July 25, 1877.

<sup>2</sup> Page 353.

Such, to say the least, is quite as probable as the contrary hypothesis of the Evangelical movement being accountable for all the mischiefs that we have seen imputed to it. The editor of the *Church Quarterly Review* might have learnt from another article of his own magazine, and, moreover, in this same number of it,—written, it has been surmised, by an eminent Churchman, not generally supposed to be biassed on the side of the Evangelical party,<sup>1</sup>—that the prevailing doctrine of the English Church during the eighteenth century was “a sort of dead orthodoxy.”<sup>2</sup> It did not need this testimony to assure us of the well-known fact. But we may thank the author of that descriptive epithet, and the editor of the *Review*, for the admission nevertheless. A “sort of dead orthodoxy” might very well have had something to do with the perpetuation of ecclesiastical abuses, the want of church building, and the scandal of pluralities and non-residence; quite as much as the errors in doctrine and practice of the Evangelical body, to which alone they are imputed by the reviewer.

And while we are acknowledging our obligation to the editor on account of this candid admission of one of his contributors, it may not be out of place to remind him that another of them, also in this very same number—himself too, if rumour is to be trusted, an eminent Churchman,<sup>3</sup> not of the Evangelical party—tells us that to the schism of the non-jurors “may be imputed, on one side, their sad history of internal feuds, decay, and disappearance; and on the other the still more sad one of the death in life of the eighteenth century Church, thus deprived of its best blood.”<sup>4</sup>

The Evangelical party, then, on the testimony of the *Church Quarterly Review* itself, started into being when the doctrine of the English Church was a sort of dead orthodoxy, and its practical condition a death in life.

I before called attention to what appeared to me a great omission on the part of the reviewer, that he had made no allowance for the particular circumstances under which they commenced their work. It was precisely this fact that ought to have been brought into prominent notice, that while “the pre-

<sup>1</sup> See *Guardian* newspaper, August 1, 1877, p. 1074.

<sup>2</sup> Page 476.

<sup>3</sup> See *Guardian* newspaper, *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Page 523.

valent doctrine" of the English Church was "a sort of dead orthodoxy" and its sad condition a "death in life," they had to cry aloud to their countrymen, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life." Upon this fact it is quite necessary to say a few words, in order that the real state of the case may be thoroughly understood.

With regard to the general tone of society in the middle of the last century, we cannot have a more credible witness than Bishop Butler, the immortal author of the *Analogy*, either as to its speculative opinions upon Christianity, or its practical application of the principles of morality and religion. Speaking of the former in the advertisement to that book, which was published in 1736, he says, "It is come, I know not how, to be taken for granted by many persons, that Christianity is not so much as a subject of enquiry; but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious. And accordingly they treat it as if in the present age this were an agreed point among all people of discernment; and nothing remained but to set it up as a principal subject of mirth and ridicule, as it were, by way of reprisals for its having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world."

Bishop Conybeare, who was consecrated in 1750, begins his treatise on Miracles with the like complaint. "Amongst other great corruptions," he says, "of the present age, this hath been generally complained of, that there is a strong prejudice against the first principles of Christianity, and that, *instead of explaining and enforcing the several branches of it*, we are put upon proving that there arises any obligation from this religion."

To quote other testimonies to the same effect would be quite superfluous. They might be had in abundance.

If such were the speculative tendencies of the age, we may readily conceive how slight would be the hold which the practical precepts of Christianity would have upon individual and social life. Upon this point also there is a great concurrence of testimony. No doubt, at all periods, it must be that offences will come. And, as Bishop Butler has observed, "there is a disposition in men to complain of the viciousness and corruption of the age in which they live."<sup>1</sup> But, notwithstanding this acknowledgment, he supposes it may be spoken as very much the distinction

<sup>1</sup> *Sermon on the Love of our Neighbour.*

of his own "to profess a contracted spirit, and greater regards to self-interest, than appears to have been done formerly,"<sup>1</sup> not merely to act upon such a narrow spirit, but even to profess it as a principle of action. Nothing, however, can be more destructive of personal and social goodness, than the selfishness which makes its own gratification the main object of pursuit. If charity is the fulfilling of the law, the perpetual contemplation of self-interest, not in the true and legitimate sense in which Christianity tells us to construe the term, but in the low and miserable sense, to which unsanctified human nature is certain to degrade it, must be the root of all practical ungodliness.

But still more than this. The infidelity of the age, independently of its own demoralising tendencies, had indirectly exercised a most depressing influence upon public morality, by the turn it had given to the pulpit instructions and the literature of the day.

To defend Christianity by arguments against the scoffers and freethinkers of the times was the manifest duty of the clergy of the Church of England, and nobly did the learned members of the body acquit themselves of the task. But there is a possibility of neglecting one imperative duty while we are endeavouring zealously to discharge another. Under all circumstances of human life, evil is attendant upon good. In this case there was the snare, to which Bishop Conybeare alludes, of being so occupied with the defence of Christianity as to cease to teach what Christianity is, and unfortunately the writers and preachers of the day fell into it. Absorbed with the paramount necessity, as they deemed it, of guarding Christianity from the attacks of her enemies without, they ceased to make adequate provision for the maintenance of spiritual teaching within. And the natural consequence followed.

Controversy, even when unavoidable, is a bad substitute for the faithful exhibition of Christian truth. The life of a Church must be maintained by its proper element. It is not by words of man's wisdom, but by the foolishness of the *κήρυγμα*, the truth which God has commanded to be proclaimed, that personal or national religion can be kept in vigorous exercise.

When the pulpits throughout the land ceased to echo the

<sup>1</sup> *Sermon on the Love of our Neighbour.*



voice of Divine Revelation, and the grand central doctrines of the Gospel were no longer heard, the true motives for holiness were no longer appreciated; the constraining love of Christ was no longer felt; men became, as might naturally be expected, the slaves of selfishness, and, gradually sinking deeper and deeper into the mire, ended in being "earthly, sensual, and devilish."<sup>1</sup>

Such, it is to be feared, had to a great degree become the moral condition of the kingdom. Secker, in his first charge as Bishop of Oxford, in 1738, while admitting almost in the same terms as Butler, that mistakes are easily made in judging of a particular age, tells his clergy, "In this we cannot be mistaken, that an open and professed disregard to religion is become, through a variety of unhappy causes, the distinguishing character of the present age; that this evil is grown to a great height in the metropolis of the nation, is daily spreading through every part of it . . . (and) hath *already brought in such dissoluteness and contempt of principle in the higher part of the world, and such profligate intemperance and fearlessness of committing crimes, in the towns*, as must, if this torrent of impiety stop not, become absolutely fatal." Fifteen years later, in his fifth charge, he still speaks in the same tone, exhorting them to preserve as many of their parishioners as possible from "the sins that so easily beset them in these seasons of epidemical unreasonableness and licentiousness." And in his first charge, as Archbishop, in 1758, he reproduces the same complaint. "Wickedness," he says, "profaneness, avowed infidelity, have made a dreadful progress in this nation." The late Sir James Stephen will not be suspected of exaggerating the faults of that age, in order to magnify the moral results of the Evangelical movement, by the contrast which its condition exhibits to that of our own. In forming his estimate of it, he has traced it to its true source, the disappearance of Evangelical doctrine, the dry and frigid teaching of morality which had taken the place of Divine Revelation. "In this anxiety to strengthen their ramparts," he says, "they not only declined to attempt new conquests, but withdrew from much of their ancient dominion. In this its apologetic age, English theology was distinguished by its unwonted timidity and coldness. . . . Taylor and Hall, Donne and

<sup>1</sup> James iii. 15.

Hooker, Baxter and Howe, had spoken as men having authority, and with an unclouded faith in their Divine mission. . . . The Tillotsons and Seckers of a later age were alike distrustful of their readers and themselves. . . . They can hardly be said to have contributed as largely as Steele and Addison, to guide the opinions, or to form the character of their generation.

“The theology of an age,” he proceeds to say, “at once ascertains and regulates *its moral stature*; and at the period of which we speak, the austere virtues of the Puritans, and the more meek and social, though not less devout, spirit of the worthies of the Church of England, if *still detected in the recesses of private life, were discountenanced by the general habits of society*. The departure of the more pure and generous influences of earlier times may be traced nowhere more clearly than in those works of fiction, in which the prevailing profligacy of manners was illustrated by Fielding, Sterne, and Smollett; and proved, though with more honest purposes, by Richardson and Defoe.”<sup>1</sup>

A writer in the *Contemporary Review* of October, 1867, in an article upon William Law, draws the following vivid and distressing picture of the irreligion and immorality of the day: “At the time,” he says, “when Law lived and wrote” (i. e. from A.D. 1686 to 1761, beyond the middle of the eighteenth century), “practical religion in this land may be held to be not unfairly represented by Dr. Trapp, and his famous book on ‘Sin and folly of being righteous overmuch;’ popular theology found a fitting exponent in Bishop Hoadly and his plain account of the doctrine of the Lord’s Supper; and *the morality of the day may be gauged by the fact* that the wives and daughters of the gentlemen of England went, night after night, to the playhouse, to hear and enjoy the filthy licentiousness of Dryden, Wycherly, Congreve, and Fielding.” From a publication of the day the writer quotes the following few but terrible words: “Deism, together with the outward profession of the Gospel, is all the religion, generally speaking, left among us.”

It will be remembered that one of the arguments adduced by the reviewer to prove the mischief of the Evangelical movement, was taken from the number of illegitimate births in certain

<sup>1</sup> *Essays on Ecclesiastical Biography*, 1849, pp. 65-67.

counties in Wales.<sup>1</sup> The inference, of course, intended to be drawn by his readers was, that this evil was the result of it ; in other words, that where it was supposed to have been most efficient, it had deteriorated rather than improved public morality. Upon the number of such births in the early part of the last century before this movement began, I have no census reports to refer to. But there is abundant evidence to prove that at that time the moral condition of Wales was as bad as, if not even worse than, that of England ; so that the insinuation of its being the result of the movement-teaching might very well have been spared.

When Rowlands, of Llangeitho, began to preach, i. e. about the year 1733, "iniquity," says his biographer, "prevailed in almost every part of Wales. The people used to collect every Sunday, from all parts of the neighbourhood, to a certain spot not far from his church, for the purpose of enjoying every sinful gratification, and perpetrating every species of iniquity and folly."

Another well-known Welshman of the day, thus describes the unhappy condition of his countrymen : "No more knowledge of God, or of His Word, was to be found in most places than in an heathen land. The immoralities and ungodliness which prevailed, were such as might be expected from this state of spiritual ignorance. The Bible was almost an unknown book, seldom to be met with, especially in the houses of the poor."<sup>2</sup> This was the man who applied, but applied in vain, to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, to supply the want of Bibles to which he here refers.<sup>3</sup>

I have spoken, I trust, with becoming thankfulness and respect, of the zeal and ability with which the more eminent of our clergy in those unhappy days defended the truth of Christianity as a Divine Revelation from the scoffers and freethinkers who assailed it. For their triumphs in this conflict we owe them "a debt immense of endless gratitude," though we cannot shut our eyes to a consequence that ensued from their exclusive devotion to this object.

But while the leaders of the host were thus employed, there is too much reason to fear that neither learning nor a high standard of morality were the special characteristics of the rank

<sup>1</sup> Page 353. <sup>2</sup> Quoted from Sir T. PHILLIPS'S *Wales*, p. 125. <sup>3</sup> See above, note, p. 28.

and file of our clergy in those days. It was, I believe, about the time of which we have been speaking, that a pasquinade was affixed to the churchyard gate of a not unimportant parish in a midland county of England.

“ No wonder that — is left in the dark,  
With a card-playing parson, and cock-fighting clerk.”

Far be it from me to insinuate that our country parishes in general were so miserably neglected, as this doggrel implies of one unhappy place. No doubt there were very many pious, conscientious pastors, faithfully striving to fulfil the ministry they had received in the Lord. But if we are to credit half that we have heard, or read, respecting the parochial ministrations of those days, the Evangelical clergy might well have looked upon the people of too many parishes, with the compassion felt by their Divine Master, when he saw the multitudes as sheep having no shepherd.

Such then was the religious and moral condition of England—I repeat that I must be understood as speaking generally—with which the leaders of the Evangelical movement had to deal.<sup>1</sup>

It is not unlikely that I may appear to have dwelt upon this topic at an unnecessary length. If so, my apology is twofold. In the first place, the lessons of history are soon forgotten. The battle of Waterloo was probably the most important event in its bearings upon the peace of England, and of the whole of Europe, that has happened in the present century. But how few of the present generation are acquainted with its details and results. How few, in like manner, realise the condition of our country, in its religious and moral aspect, a hundred years ago. And if they do not, how can they duly appreciate the labours of those who, under God, delivered us from it, or the hard conflict they had to maintain before the victory was won!

<sup>1</sup> To quote the words of the late Bishop of Ossory (*Charge*, 1866): “ Whatever differences may seem to exist as to the cause of the actual condition of things, all seem to be agreed as to the fact, that it was a time of unparalleled coldness, and inertness, and worldliness. . . . There is nothing connected with the low state of religion better established than that the great doctrines of the Gospel, which had been brought back to the Church at the Reformation, had fallen again into oblivion. They were embodied in the Liturgy, and Articles, and Homilies of the Church, but they had disappeared entirely from its public teaching; and if on some rare occasions they were brought forward in the pulpit or through the press, were looked upon with undisguised aversion or alarm, as troublesome or dangerous intruders.”

And, secondly, because the film which party spirit and prejudice are apt to throw over our eyes, is so obstructive to the clearness of our vision, that if evils exist in the Church, as they did in St. Paul's days and ever will, we naturally impute them to those with whom we disagree. If any defects are found in *their* system or practice, it is with difficulty we give them the credit of possessing any goodness at all.

Such, I confess, appears to me to have been the case with the writer of this review. Ostensibly undertaking to prove one particular point, he has made his article a peg upon which to hang everything that could be said to the discredit of those from whom he differs; making no charitable allowances for their faults, and leaving his readers in total ignorance of any benefits which resulted from their work. That they "were zealous and earnest," he does not care to deny. But that "to the Church," which, as a vast number of Churchmen believe, they raised, by God's help, from this dreadful depression, and prepared for whatever has since followed of deep spiritual religion in individual life, or order in her public services, "they were loyal and true," he does not hesitate to call in question. Thousands and thousands were quickened by their instrumentality to life and godliness. But that has not prevented him from holding them up to unjust reproach and very severe condemnation.

What we really learn from the history of the closing years of the last century is a sufficient refutation of his charges. Notwithstanding the infidelity of the times, so firm was the hold which Christian truth, through the power of their preaching, had regained over the hearts and affections of their countrymen, that the storm which swept away even the public profession of Christianity in France, dashed in vain against the rocks which girt and defended our shores. Though our pulpits once more taught from *their* lips the riches of God's grace to fallen man, through the incarnation, the spotless example, the death, resurrection, and ascension of Him who was God manifested in the flesh; though we had again learnt through *their* instruction that man could not be enlightened, strengthened, comforted, prepared for a happy immortality by human reason, but by the power of God the Holy Ghost; instead of being hailed as fellow soldiers marching under the banner of the Church, *the chief success* that

resulted from their efforts is declared to be the propagation of Dissent. They left undone what they ought to have done; they did what they ought not to have done. "To act in the spirit of the Prayer Book was to condemn utterly all their teaching and practice." There was no health in them. !!

And yet what had they done to merit these reproaches?

There must, I imagine, in addition to the various charges already noticed, have been some further motive for the feeling that suggested, and the spirit that pervades this hostile attack upon the Evangelical movement. Was it that the fathers of it were an insubordinate body of men? That charge is brought directly by the reviewer against the reformers of 1740. They claimed, it is said, "immunity from discipline."<sup>1</sup> But of the Evangelical clergy, it is not true to say that they "had been expending all their strength and energy in defying Church discipline."<sup>2</sup> There may have been among them, as there certainly have been in some other bodies of Episcopalian clergy, some wrong-headed, perhaps young men, who from self-sufficiency or ignorance did not pay proper deference to their ecclesiastical superiors. There may have been some better and wiser men, who, goaded by the opposition and ill-treatment, which in those days of worldlimindedness and intolerance were not the unfrequent lot of the Evangelical clergy, may have sometimes forgotten their own principles, and acted in opposition to their bishops. But though they did not parade upon their colours, as some others have since done, *Μηδὲν χωρὶς τοῦ Ἐπισκόπου*, I believe the following words of the Rev. Charles Simeon would correctly represent their general feeling and conduct: "As under Divine Providence your Lordship is now become my immediate superior in the Church, to whom I owe all possible deference and respect, I trust your Lordship will approve my wish to lay before you the means of ascertaining my true sentiments, and of obviating any misconceptions, which the statements of others, however unintentionally, might possibly create."<sup>3</sup>

Or is the motive rather to be traced to the fact, that the Evangelical movement was not in harmony with that sacramental system, which is the keynote to the theology of the school whose opinions may, I suppose, be identified with those of the *Church*

<sup>1</sup> Page 340.

<sup>2</sup> Page 347.

<sup>3</sup> CARUS'S *Life*, chap. xi. p. 276.

*Quarterly Review*? Is this the meaning of the very grave accusation before adverted to, "to act in the spirit of the Prayer Book was to condemn utterly all their teaching and practice"?

Into the controversies connected with that most important question, it is not the purpose of these pages to enter. From the principle upon which the Church of England takes her stand, different views have ever existed, and will always exist among her members with respect to it. To hold that there are two, and two only, Sacraments, and that these are "generally necessary to salvation," is an essential condition of being included within her pale. That "Sacraments be not only badges or tokens, but also effectual signs of grace and God's goodwill towards us, by the which He doth work invisibly in us,"<sup>1</sup> is a doctrine no less clearly laid down by our Church, and of necessity to be believed by everyone who claims to be a true and loyal Churchman. But when we try to go deeper into these matters than it has pleased God to explain them; to determine exactly *what amount* of grace is permitted to flow through these channels, and *how* it is imparted, we are speedily involved in inextricable difficulties; and if we determine to make our own conclusions the rule of faith for others as well as ourselves, discord and distraction must be the necessary result of our uncharitableness. What right have we to call a brother faithless and disloyal because, while he admits the fundamental truths, which we are all required to accept, he withholds his consent from our private conclusions, and is as tenacious of his own opinions as we are of ours? So long as we profess heartily to believe in "one Baptism for the remission of sins," and accept it as an article of faith, that the Body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, "only after an heavenly and spiritual manner," and (that) "the mean whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is faith,"<sup>2</sup> far better would it be for each party to hold with reverence and charity what it conscientiously believes to be divinely revealed and to be included within the scope of those expressions, than to exhibit its own uncharitableness by pronouncing a harsh and dogmatical judgment on those with whom it cannot agree. As a matter of historical fact, it is notorious that a diversity of opinion upon these deep questions has existed from the very period of the

<sup>1</sup> Art. xxv.

<sup>2</sup> Nicene Creed, and Art. xxviii.

Reformation, and that the Church of England has opened her arms wide enough to embrace all who devoutly maintain what she has declared to be essential truth. She claims to herself no infallibility. Where the Scriptures are positive, she speaks with authority and demands submission. She brands no man as unfaithful and disloyal, who takes his stand upon this solid ground. Bigotry and intolerance may do so. But with them she at least has no sympathy.

But to bring these remarks to a close; if it be true that during the first two reigns of the Hanoverian family the Church had sadly declined from the vigorous action she had been exhibiting, and the consequent progress she had recently made, may we not find in the effect produced in the national mind by that circumstance, coupled with its effects upon the clergy and upon public morality, a very probable cause of the vast increase of Dissent during the remainder of the century? Might not one have reasonably thought, antecedently to any enquiry, that vast numbers would forsake a Church which they saw in so lamentable a condition; and that we need not go farther to account for a vast amount of schism, when the seeds of it had thus been broadcast all over the land, and were sure, as a natural result, to bring forth an abundant crop? Theologians may argue as long and as loudly as they please, upon what are commonly called "Church principles,"<sup>1</sup> episcopal succession, the claims of the Church as of Divine origin, the evils of schism, and the invalidity of Sacraments not duly administered. But if this be all that is meant by teaching Church principles, their arguments will have little effect upon the popular mind. Many a pious soul may have been driven from the fold of the Church in those days by the practical conviction, that she was not feeding her children as faithfully as she should have done with the pure milk of Christian doctrine, and by the view, daily exhibited before their eyes, of the national ungodliness, which her influence was unable, and seemed not likely to prevent.

The reviewer is not satisfied with this possible solution of the problem. Beyond the tyranny of Walpole and the abuses of Church patronage, he seeks for another cause, and he finds it in the "deplorably mistaken course of the fathers of the

<sup>1</sup> Page 355.



Evangelical movement." If he had merely meant to say that nonconformity followed the movement, *post hoc, sed not propter hoc*, as some might use the phrase, just as Antinomianism did in fact follow the revival of the doctrine of justification by faith, it would have been one thing; but to charge it with being the legitimate parent of Dissent is quite another. For reasons already stated, I entirely disagree with this conclusion. To myself, I confess, it sounds almost as ridiculous as a sentence which, as I have been informed, fell several years ago from the lips of an Edinburgh professor, while instructing his class: "Owing to the baneful influence of Christianity, philosophy made but little progress during this century." But if we feel it impossible to accept it as a satisfactory explanation of the fact, is there no other probable account that can be given of it? Possibly there may have been several concurrent causes. To refer all the diseases of the body to one cause, and profess to cure them all by one remedy is, I suppose, the essence of empiricism in reference to the science of pathology. To assign one reason only for the increase of Dissent in any given period would be no less open to objection. To myself it appears that two very sufficient explanations may be given; in the first place, that the orthodoxy of the age had been, and continued more or less, till its zeal was enkindled by the Evangelical movement, "a sort of dead orthodoxy," and the life of the Church of England a "death in life," which is an admitted fact. Secondly, that the vastly increased population of the kingdom had been left without provision for its religious instruction, and was obliged by this neglect to seek that instruction elsewhere. On the first of these subjects, having already expressed my sentiments, I shall say no more. The second alone would be sufficient to exonerate the Evangelical movement from the burden which in the review is imposed upon it.

Upon the motives connected with the moral and religious condition of a nation, which may induce the Almighty to order the course of His providence in any particular direction, it becomes us, if we speculate at all, to do so with profound humility and reverence. It is conceivable that in this instance the want of faithfulness in the Church, and the prevalent ungodliness of the times, both of which are also admitted facts,

may have been the reason why He thought fit to visit us with this trial ; that, as it is a "good and joyful thing for brethren to dwell together in unity," so by thus permitting the one body of the Church to be rent asunder, He might intend to call us to national repentance. But into the secrets of the Divine purposes we cannot penetrate. So far as it may be useful as a guide to our own conduct, we may not improperly indulge in such reflections. Beyond that we cannot take a step.

Of second causes, however, it *is* permitted us to speak ; and I think there have been circumstances in our national history to which we may reasonably ascribe the marvellous growth of schism, or from which we might have safely predicted it, as an unavoidable consequence of positive facts.

To state the real truth, the people did not so much go astray from the Church, as they were abandoned by it. Towards the close of the century—and much more has the same evil been progressing in the present—the population of the kingdom had so amazingly increased, that it had outgrown the means of grace which the national Church had at its command.

Such is human nature, that even when those means are abundantly provided, the evil that is in us will always be casting hindrances in the way of personal and national religion. "Sic omnia fatis," says the poet,

" In pejus ruere, et retro sublapsa referri,  
Non aliter quam qui adverso vix flumine lembum  
Remigio subigit, si brachia forte remisit,  
Atque illum in præceps pronò rapit alveus amni."<sup>1</sup>

But if deterioration is the tendency of unassisted nature, how much more may this result be anticipated, when thousands are left without these blessings ; and left, so far as the Church is concerned, absolutely destitute of spiritual superintendence ? The parochial system may still so far suffice that ministers may by law be applied to for marriage, for the baptism of children—if the parents have religion enough to make them desire it—and for the burial of the dead ; but, were all desirous of uniting in worship on the Lord's Day, without an adequate number of churches there would be no possibility of receiving them ; without a due supply of clergy, if his people were on sick beds,

<sup>1</sup> VIRGIL, *Georg.* i. 199.

the overburdened parish priest could not possibly do for them what, if he were a man after God's own heart, he would be most anxious to do.

Such, at the close of the eighteenth century, was the case with the Church of England. No due provision had been made even then for the increasing population. Upon this we may appeal to the reviewer's own testimony: "Hardly a church," he says, "had been built in London for seventy years; of its 1,129,000 souls, one million were unprovided for in the churches of the national Establishment."<sup>1</sup> But not in the metropolis alone did this destitution exist. "At home," he says,<sup>2</sup> "a population increasing with, for that age, unexampled rapidity, was permitted to grow up uncared for and uninstructed. The tendency of people to gravitate towards the towns, had already begun to manifest itself. . . . That progress had begun which was to result in those festering masses of heathenism which . . . are both a danger and disgrace to our country." And what meanwhile had been the case with the rural districts? Speaking of the days of Wesley, he says, "We must remember that population was increasing rapidly, not merely in larger towns . . . but in remote districts, and what had hitherto been secluded hamlets."<sup>3</sup>

How great, then, must have been the sum total of the neglect! How incapable must the Church have been, supposing all her clergy to have given themselves, heart and soul, to the work, of retaining the scattered multitudes within her pale! The seed of the mischief, as we have seen, had been already so widely spread, that of itself, unless a miracle had prevented it, it must have sprung and grown up, and brought forth most abundantly the full corn in the ear. How much more when it fell upon a soil so admirably prepared for its reception. Need we, then, go a single step farther in order to detect a sufficient cause for the growth of nonconformity in the eighteenth century? and does not the light of present experience give us a clear insight into the history of the past? If a deficiency in the means of religious instruction was a sad reality *then*, it is a far worse reality now. However we may shut our eyes to the fact; though we pride ourselves on being a Christian nation, thousands, I might say

<sup>1</sup> Page 347.<sup>2</sup> Page 317.<sup>3</sup> Page 350.

millions, unless they provide teachers for themselves, must remain in a great measure, not a few of them, *altogether* destitute of Christian knowledge. If they are not dissenters, they must be practically heathens, guided by no Christian rule of life, having no Christian hope for the world to come. And, as a matter of fact, multitudes do become dissenters from this cause, and this cause alone.

Upon this subject I may perhaps be pardoned, if I illustrate my hypothesis by reference to the diocese with which I am most nearly connected. Many other parts of the kingdom might, however, teach the same lesson. The statement has been so often and so confidently made, that now, when it is repeated, it is generally assumed as an incontrovertible fact, that Wales is a country all but given up to Dissent. Not only is it commonly supposed that it abounds with dissenters, but it is also taken for granted that this state of things is incurable and certain to continue, nonconformity having, it is imagined, been deliberately adopted as the religion of the people. There is, no doubt, a large amount of it in the Principality; and, of course, in many instances it has been adopted after careful consideration. But the Dissent of Wales is, to a very great degree, the Dissent of circumstances and tradition, rather than the Dissent of deliberate conviction, founded upon any comparison of its own principles with those of the Church of England. To take the case of my own diocese, for to that alone I confine my observations, its population in 1800 was only 117,000. In 1871 it was 503,000. As I travel over the hills in Glamorganshire and Monmouthshire, I ask myself, with the most painful feelings, what is the Church of England doing for the thousands of people whose cottages I see before me? To account for these feelings, I will mention only one instance. A parish with an income for its vicar of only about 130 pounds per annum was refused an augmentation for a long time by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, in conformity with one of their regulations, because its population did not amount to 4000. Its returned population in the very next census was 17,774, and it has been marvellously increasing ever since. Two additional churches are at this moment in contemplation. But contemplation does not necessarily imply completion of the purpose; and in ordinary cases, even if churches are built, where

is an endowment to come from? What, then, is the Church to do? Who can wonder if, under such circumstances, chapels are multiplied, and the strength of nonconformity apparently increased? Not that the Church in this diocese has of late years been asleep. Great efforts have been made, and with great success. Her exertions have been duly appreciated, and if she had but the means of making herself known, as a national Church ought to do, there are good reasons for believing that she would gladly be acknowledged as such, by many who now do not belong to her simply because they have no opportunities of knowing what she is, or of accepting her ministrations.

To return, then, from this digression. The further question remains, Who was responsible in the eighteenth century for the insufficiency that has been pointed out?

The reviewer unhesitatingly replies, The fathers of the Evangelical movement. What, then, had the High Church party been doing all the time, towards the building of churches, or the supply of additional pastors, to meet the necessities of the case? What use had been made of the wealth, the power, and the court patronage which had certainly been very much more at their command, than in the hands of those from whom they so long stood aloof, not to say, in many instances, whom they had opposed to the utmost of their power? The Incorporated Society for Building Churches was not established till 1818, the Society for Providing Additional Curates only followed the wake of the Church Pastoral Aid Society, which commenced in 1836.

In saying this, I neither wish to exalt or depress one party or the other. They may both plead guilty to the charge, that their eyes had not been sufficiently open to the magnitude of the evil which was making such progress, and fraught with such dangerous results. They did not see, as they should have done, that while they were zealous for the propagation of the Gospel in foreign parts, or preaching the Gospel to the heathen abroad, they had a primary duty to perform in making provision for the salvation of heathens at home. Public attention had not yet been called to the subject. If the Evangelical movement had anything to do with this neglect of duty, it may well be asked whether the torpor and apathy of those who did not sympathise with it, are not accountable just as much as, if not more than

its fathers, for the marvellous growth of schism which the reviewer thinks fit to impute to them alone.

To the former, I believe, must be ascribed the praise, that by recalling men's minds to the grand central truths of Christianity, which furnish the only constraining motives for Christian practice, they called into action at the same time, through the Divine blessing on their labours, that inherent vital energy which the Church has of late been putting out for the correction of these evils. Whatever may have been their errors of judgment, whatever their occasional acts of intemperate zeal, whatever their sins of omission or commission, no "impartial person," I think, will admit that justice has been done them by the *Church Quarterly Review*. The late Sir James Stephen was a man who had been born and bred amongst them, who was well acquainted with their virtues and their faults; and at any rate cannot be regarded as a partisan in their ranks. "Enough," he says, "will remain to convince every impartial enquirer, that the first generation of the clergy designated as Evangelical (i. e. the fathers of the movement), were *the second founders of the Church of England*,—that the doctrines of the New Testament were to them a reality, and the English Liturgy a truth,—that they burned with an enlightened zeal for the kingdom of Christ, and for those external verities on which that kingdom is founded,—that their personal sanctity rose to the same elevation as their theological opinions,—and that in all these respects they formed a contrast, as cheering in one light as it was melancholy in another, to the spirit which in that age characterised their clerical brethren."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Essays on Ecclesiastical Biography*, p. 169.

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